

Minutes of the Princeton Historical Commission
February 5, 2009

Attendees: Joyce Anderson, Sheila Dubman, Nathaniel Gove and Alex Fiandaca

New Business:

Meetinghouse Cemetery

Members discussed extending an offer to Bruce Rollins to help with Meetinghouse cemetery clean-up if needed. Since the ice storm at least two stones have fallen and broken in half. Many others have shifted under the weight of the tangle of heavy branches.

Old Business:

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Members agreed not to pursue a demolition delay bylaw for this coming town meeting in May. Members agree that more time is needed to educate ourselves and the town. Future preparations will include meeting with John Wilson (building inspector) and consulting with towns that have the bylaw in place. Members discussed the need for a consistent approach toward determining which buildings shall be considered worthy of the delay vs. those that are not. It was also questioned whether or not the bylaw should apply to structures that are not visible from the road such as a backyard structure. A counterpoint was made that this would fail to capture houses enshrouded by trees. Stonewall protection was also discussed and debated. An outline of steps the commission would take during the delay period is also needed.

Concern was also raised about penalties for those who proceed with demolition without permission. A critical point was made that failure to obtain a demolition permit (whether the house is two years old or two hundred) should result in a penalty that rests with the planning board, not the historical commission. That is, the existing demolition bylaw should include strong penalties that discourage unauthorized demolition.

The notion of photographing the buildings prior to demolition was also discussed. While photographing from the curbside is legal, it would be ideal to have the homeowner's permission to take photos from all angles, including the interior so that floor plans and other features can be captured.

The proposed bylaw, as discussed at the January PHC meeting includes the following points: 6 month delay that applies to the total demolition of buildings and other man made structures 75 years or older. The delay period will allow the Commission to provide guidance on preservation tools such as grants, connect the owner with a possible buyer and allow the Commission an opportunity to document and photograph the structure before it disappears forever. The bylaw would in no way restrict the building inspector from issuing emergency demolition orders.

At the Selectmen's meeting Tuesday, January 20, Joe O'Brien and Alan Sentkowski agreed with the spirit of the bylaw but wanted much more detail before giving their approval. They were also concerned that a delay of 6 months would be a burden because it consumes most of the building season. The Selectmen were also interested in reviewing example bylaws from other towns.

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Historical Markers for National Register Districts

Members reviewed plaque wording for West Village and Russell Corner. It was suggested that Russell Corner should be reworded to include John Russell and his store.

Plaque pricing and Commission funds were reviewed.

Available PHC funds:

Donations account: \$3,117.58

PHC budget (from 2008): \$1485.76

Unencumbered funds: \$783.02

Total: \$5,386.36

Plaque pricing for West Village, Meetinghouse Cemetery and Russell Corner:

Each 26 x 36" Revised Ohio aluminum plaque with 1" lettering costs \$1,450. The poles that are included are only seven feet tall. 10 foot poles are needed so the pole will stand at seven feet with three feet underground. This extra charge is \$25 per pole. The price for three plaques with three 10 foot poles is \$4,425. A one-time set-up fee of \$125 for including the town seal on all three plaques brings the total to \$ 4,500.

Plaque pricing for Town Center:

One 18 x 24 bronze plaque from Healey Bros. costs \$1,068.

Seal charge is not known.

Boulder obtained by sign maker: \$300

Preparation of stone: \$175

Installation: \$300

Total (not including seal) \$1,843

All four plaques: \$6,393

PHC Funds: \$5,386

difference: \$1,007

Members agreed to approach the 250th committee at their February 10th meeting for \$ 1,007.

Member also discussed the possibility of including some mention of the 250th anniversary on the plaque. Possible wording and dates were discussed. Concerns arose over the appropriateness of adding the 250th to a plaque intended to commemorate a National Register listing.

Mechanics Hall

At the Selectmen's meeting Tuesday, January 20, Joe and Alan and Dennis were all receptive to starting discussions that would lead to a resolution for Mechanics Hall. They were also agreeable to short-term improvements such as pavement patching, painting the façade, installing a light above the door, all of which will help give the building a less abandoned look and may also attract a buyer.

Respectfully submitted,
Alex Fiandaca